GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4205
ANSWERED ON:23.04.2008
SHORTFALL OF CORNEAS
Dhanaraju Dr. K.

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any target has been fixed regarding collection of Corneas;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the shortfall in the country, if any; and

(c) the steps taken by the Government to achieve the target?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE(SMT. PANABAKA LAKSHMI)

(a) & (b):- The target during 10th Five Year Plan (2002-2007) was to collect 1,75,000 donated eyes for corneal transplantation.As against the said target, around 1,25,137 donated eyes were collected.At present, about 30,000 donated eyes are collected annually in the country against an estimated demand of at least 80000 to 100000 of corneas per year for transplantation purpose.

The reasons for shortfall in collection of required number of donated eyes are:-

i) The Eye Banks collect eyes from registered donors after their death and also from those patients who die in hospitals through "Hospital Corneal Retrieval Programme".Many of the Eye Banks are starved for donor material and there is perennial shortage of corneas.A significant percentage of the donated tissue become unfit for transplantation because of the lack of logistic support for timely collection of eyes by the Eye Banks and the time is the real essence in corneal grafting. The eyes are to be removed within 4 to 6 hours from the dead bodies.

ii) In addition, due to sentimental reasons, the next of the kin of the deceased hesitate to allow removal of eyes of the deceased.Thus, there is always a gap between the demand and supply.

iii) Lack of proper awareness and education about donation of Eyes.

(c) Information Education Communication (IEC) is an on-going activity under the National Programme for Control of Blindness. Awareness among masses about Eye donation is created through print and electronic media at central as well as state and district levels as a part of IEC activity.

The most important event to promote eye donation under NPCB is observance of "National Eye Donation Fortnight" in the country from 25th August to 8th September every year with a view to accelerate educational and motivational efforts amongst the public to donate eyes and make it a family tradition. During the fortnight, the following major activities are undertaken:-

i) Awareness campaign on Eye donation through NGOs, Senior Citizen Groups, Youth Associations and Resident Welfare Associations etc.

ii) Involve teachers and school children in spreading the message on eye donation.

iii) Involve corporate sector to participate and sponsor activities like sponsoring grief counselor/ Medical Social Worker in major hospitals to motivate the family members of the deceased to donate eyes.

iv) Involve cable operators and cinema halls to flash messages on eye donation.

v) Involve influential persons such as politicians, sports persons, celebrities etc. to promote eye donation.

vi) Enhance collection of donated eyes through "Hospitals Retrieval Programme" in Hospitals.